

# A BRILLIANT ME IN ACTION ONE PAGE GUIDE TO...

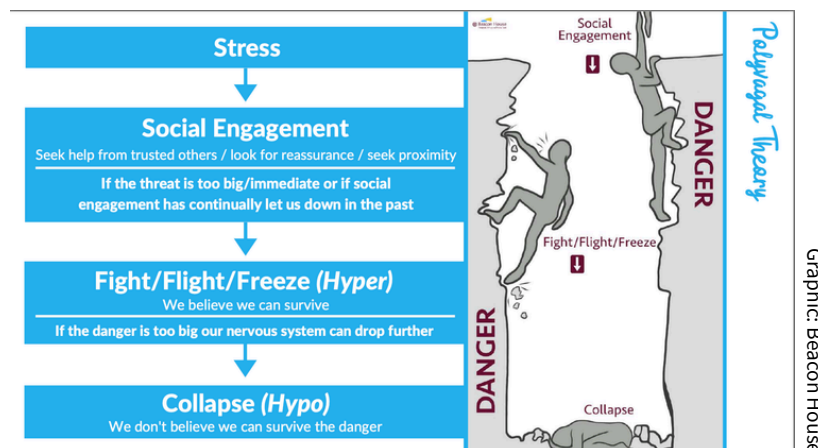
## POLYVAGAL THEORY

**Dr. Stephen Porges' Polyvagal Theory** explains how our nervous system responds to stress and safety. When we face stress, our nervous system responds in a sequence based on three states:

### WHAT?

- Social engagement (regulated, connected)
- Fight/flight (mobilised, anxious)
- Freeze (shutdown, disconnected)

Co-regulation and felt safety are key to helping children return to a calm, connected state.



An understanding of how the nervous system works is a powerful tool for both adults and children to help understand behaviour and threat responses.

### WHY?

Understanding **Polyvagal Theory** helps educators recognise that children's behaviour is often a stress response—not deliberate misbehaviour. It supports trauma-informed practice, emotional safety, and helps staff respond with empathy and regulation strategies. It links closely to self-regulation, emotional awareness, and creating calm, connected learning environments.

Developing understanding of the brain & nervous system and learning self-regulation skills alongside co-regulation can support children towards **self-awareness** and self-management, improve **social awareness & relationship skills** and lead to responsible **decision-making**.

### SEL?

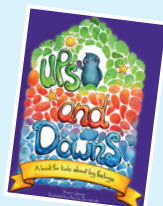
[What is Polyvagal Theory \(Polyvagal Institute\)](#)

[Brilliant ME in Action \(Brain science p 50ff\)](#)

[Video: The Window of Tolerance \(Beacon House\)](#)

### FIND OUT MORE

**Ups and Downs:  
A Book about Big Feelings**  
by Karen Young -  
Polyvagal Theory in a  
brilliant picture book!



### SEE ALSO

- Window of Tolerance
- AEN
- Regulate, Relate, Reason